

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 02904 251105Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----111989 251110Z /13

O R 250954Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8082
INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY LONDON

S E C R E T BEIRUT 2904

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, PERP, MARR, UN, LE, IS, PLO
SUBJ: UNIFIL PROBLEMS

REF: (A) STATE 127546, (B) TEL AVIV 6547, (C) JERUSALEM 1443

1. SUMMARY. FOLLOWING ARE COMMENTS ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE UNIFIL PROBLEM WHICH HAVE ARISEN IN RECENT MESSAGES.

2. U.N. AUTHORITY. DEPARTMENT'S CLARIFICATION OF QUESTIONS CONCERNING EFFECTIVENESS OF UNIFIL MANDATE (REF A) IS MOST WELCOME. AS SEEN FROM BEIRUT, UN RESOLUTIONS 425 AND 426 ARE BROADLY ENOUGH WRITTEN THAT THERE CAN BE NO SERIOUS DOUBT OF AUTHORITY OF UN TO "PREVENT ARMED PALESTINIANS FROM REESTABLISHING THEMSELVES IN THE SOUTH," IF THE UN CHOSSES TO INTERPRET ITS MANDATE THAT WAY. HOWEVER, THE PLO HAS NOT ACCPETED SUCH A BROAD INTERPRETATION OF THE UN RESOLUTIONS, THUS KEEPING OPEN
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ITS OPTION OF RESISTING ANY UN EFFORTS TO CONTROL THEM BY FORCE.

3. SUFFICIENT FORCES. IF UN IS TO INTERPRET ITS MANDATE TO MEAN THAT NO ARMED PALESTINIANS WHATSOEVER MAY BE PERMITTED IN SOUTH LEBANON, AND IF PLO--OR SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS THEREOF-- CHOOSE TO CHALLENGE THE UN ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE, WE DOUBT

VERY MUCH THAT THE PROJECTED 6,000-MAN FORCE LEVEL WILL BE SUFFICIENT. WE REALIZE THAT MANY TROOP CONTRIBUTORS MAY DECIDE TO PULL OUT RATHER THAN RISK A FULL-SCALE MILITARY CONFRONTATION WITH THE ISRAELIS. HOWEVER, IF UNIFIL DOES STAY AND HAS TO FIGHT, IT IS THE CONSENSUS OF QUALIFIED MILITARY OBSERVERS HERE THAT THE SIZE AND NATURE OF THE TERRAIN AND THE NUMBER AND ABILITIES OF THE PALESTINIANS INDICATE A NEED FOR A FORCE OF ABOUT 15,000 GROUND TROOPS FOR UNIFIL, PLUS AIR, SEA, AND SUPPORT ELEMENTS NUMBERING ABOUT 5,000 ADDITIONAL. WE HAVE NOT SEEN OR HEARD ANYTHING FROM OFFICIAL UN SOURCES, BUT WOULD BE VERY INTERESTED TO KNOW WHAT GENERAL SIILASVUO, FOR EXAMPLE, IS NOW THINKING ABOUT THIS PROBLEM.

4. "CONTROL" OF MOVEMENT "INTO AND OUT OF THE ZONE". DOES UNIFIL'S AUTHORITY TO CONTROL MOVEMENT IN AND OUT OF ITS ZONE OF OPERATIONS INCLUDE UNARMED PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS? WE NOTE THAT, SO FAR, UNIFIL CONTINGENTS ARE ALLOWING UNARMED PALESTINIANS TO PASS. THIS MAKES IT RELATIVELY EASY FOR THE PALESTINIANS TO DISPATCH THEIR MEN TO THE SOUTH, SEPARATE FROM THEIR EQUIPMENT, AND EITHER SMUGGLE THE ARMS IN SEPARATELY OR RELY ON WEAPONS CACHES ALREADY IN PLACE IN SOUTH LEBANON. THIS GIVES THE PALESTINIANS THE POSSIBILITY OF RECREATING AN ARMED FORCE IN SOUTH LEBANON WITHOUT DIRECTLY INFILTRATING THEM THRU UNIFIL LINES.

6. PALESTINIAN ARMED PRESENCE IN THE SOUTH, THE CAIRO ACCORD
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AND THE UN RESOLUTIONS. EMBASSY TEL AVIV POINTS OUT CORRECTLY (REFTEL B, PARA 2) THAT THE CAIRO ACCORD DOES NOT MAKE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN PALESTINIAN ARMED PRESENCE IN THE SOUTH AND PALESTINIAN CROSS-BORDER OPERATIONS AGAINST ISRAEL. HOWEVER, THE CHTAURA AGREEMENT OF 1977, WHICH WAS AN "PMPLEMENTATION" OF THE CAIRO ACCORD, STIPULATES THAT THERE WOULD BE NO PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN SOUTH LEBANON WITHIN TEN KILOMETERS OF THE ISRAELI BORDER. NUMEROUS PALESTINIAN STATEMENTS IN 1977 AND EVEN MORE RECENTLY ASSERT THAT THE PALESTINIANS DO NOT REPEAT NOT INTEND TO CONDUCT OPERATIONS AGAINST ISRAEL FROM SOUTH LEBANON, BUT THEY WILL PROBABLY INSIST ON THEIR RIGHT TO DO SO UNDER THE CAIRO ACCORD IN 1977, IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF THE CHTAURA AGREEMENT TO THEIR OWN RANK AND FILE. (SEE, FOR EXAMPLY, 77 BEIRUT 4372, PARA 11.) THIS POSITION MAY OR MAY NOT BE SINCERE, BUT IN FACT THE PALESTINIANS HAVE NOT ATTEMPTED ANY CROSS BORDER OPERATIONS FROM LEBANON FOR SEVERAL YEARS. ARAFAT, ACCORDING TO JONAH (REFTEL C, PARA 2(C)), AGAIN MADE A CONDITIONAL PROMISE TO THIS EFFECT, DIRECTLY TO THE UN.

7. PLO ACTION AGAINST ISRAEL AND UNIFIL. RE REFTEL B (PARA 3), UNIFIL MAY BE ABLE TO PREVENT "A RESUMPTION OF THE CYCLE

OF PLO TERRORISM AND ISRAELI REPRISAL" IN SOUTH LEBANON, BUT UNIFIL IS NOT INTENDED TO--NOR CAN IT--PREVENT PLO OPERATIONS AGAINST ISRAEL ORIGINATING FROM OTHER PLACES. PALESTINIAN ATTACK WHICH TRIGGERED ISRAELIS INVASION OF SOUTH LEBANON IN MARCH OF THIS YEAR WAS LAUNCHED AGAINST ISRAEL BY A BOAT WHICH PROBABLY DEPARTED FROM NORTH OF THE LITANI. THE ISRAELIS THEMSELVES CLAIMED AS MUCH IN THE COURSE OF JUSTIFYING AIR STRIKES AGAINST OUZAI AND DAMOUR ON MARCH 15.

8. GOL ABROGATION OF THE CAIRO AGREEMENT. RE PARA 3, REF B, THE GOL HAS NOT REPEAT NOT AS FAR AS WE KNOW TAKEN THE POSITION EITHER PRIVATELY OR PUBLICLY THAT 425 ABROGATES THE CAIRO AGREEMENT, ALTHOUGH THIS MAY BE THE PRIVATE VIEW OF FONMIN BOUTROS. THE MOST PRIME MINISTER HOSS HAS SAID
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IS THAT 425 SUPERCEDES THE CAIRO AGREEMENT AS LONG AS UNIFIL IS IN LEBANON.

9. LEGITIMACY OF GOL AND UN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOL. UN REPRESENTATIVE JONAH'S COMMENTS THAT "SARKIS, BOUTROS AND KHOURY REPRESENT ONLY THE CHRISTIAN FACTION." (REFTEL C, PARA 6) ARE UNFAIR AND WRONG. SARKIS ENJOYS FULL CONFIDENCE OF (MOSLEM) PRIME MINISTER HOSS AND MOST LEBANESE MOSLEMS. SARKIS'S MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEMS (SUCH AS DURING THE RECENT CABINET EPISODE) ARE WITH CHRISTIAN POLITICIANS, NOT THE MOSLEMS. KHOURY IS WORKING, SLOWLY TO BE SURE, TO BUILD AN INTERCONFESSIONAL ARMY AND CERTAINLY HAS MORE MOSLEM SUPPORT THAN ANY OTHER CHRISTIAN OFFICER. JONAH'S REMARKS ABOUT UN REPS ARE ALSO INACCURATE; IN OUR EXPERIENCE THEY DEAL WITH TOP GOL OFFICIALS ON BASIS OF THEIR JOB RESPONSIBILITIES, NOT THEIR RELIGION. THEIR CONTACTS INCLUDE, IN ADDITION TO PM HOSS, MINISTER OF HEALTH SHEITO (SHIA) AND RECONSTRUCTION COUNCIL CHAIRMAN ATTALAH (SUNNI).
LANE

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TROOP DEPLOYMENT, INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING FORCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 may 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BEIRUT02904
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780220-1160
Format: TEL
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780521/aaaaarim.tel
Line Count: 155
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 18fc4497-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 78 STATE 127546, 78 TEL AVIV 6547, 78 JERUSALEM 1443
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2578257
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UNIFIL PROBLEMS
TAGS: PDIP, PEPR, MARR, LE, IS, UN, PLO, UNIFIL
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/18fc4497-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014